

COMMON STORY ELEMENTS OF MODERN FANTASY		
Element	Definition	Characteristics
Animals that behave like humans	Animals have human characteristics, such as the ability to talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Animals act like people</li> <li>• Combination of human and animal characters or all animal characters</li> <li>• Usually set in the real world but with unreal characters</li> </ul>
Toys and objects that come to life	Inanimate objects come to life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inanimate objects talk and have personalities</li> </ul>
Eccentric and extraordinary characters	Characters are very unusual in some way: have magical powers, are humorous, or are very eccentric	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exaggerated character traits</li> <li>• Humor</li> <li>• Magical happenings</li> </ul>
Time travel	Characters travel through time or settings that shift from one time period to another	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often have special settings conducive to time travel</li> <li>• Sometimes connect time travel to objects</li> <li>• Characters enter other worlds</li> <li>• Characters from different generations meet</li> </ul>
Ghosts and the supernatural	Ghosts appear to living people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be benevolent or dangerous</li> <li>• Often but not always frightening</li> <li>• Usually resolved when the ghost's problem is solved</li> </ul>
Imaginary worlds	A completely imaginary world	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May begin in the real world but characters are transported to an imaginary world</li> <li>• Settings with very unusual features that seem believable within that world</li> </ul>
Tiny people	Human characters are much smaller than humans in the real world	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May exist within the real world alongside humans</li> <li>• May encounter danger from ordinary household pets such as cats</li> <li>• May exist in imaginary tiny worlds</li> </ul>

**Figure 8.6** Common story elements in modern fantasy

(Williams 1922), in which a boy's beloved stuffed rabbit becomes real.

### **Eccentric and Extraordinary Characters**

Roald Dahl is known for the eccentric and memorable characters he has created in books like *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964) and *James and the Giant Peach* (1961). Characters from older classics like Mary Poppins, Dr. Doolittle, and Pippi Longstocking endure

over the years to delight both children and adults. Although these characters are described in vivid detail and are full of life, they are static in that they do not change and develop much over the course of the story or stories. Readers can count on Mary Poppins' prim, take-charge attitude and her unwavering magical powers in story after story, just as they can count on Pippi Longstocking's cheerfulness, strong-mindedness, and sense of fun.